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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY POST-COPENHAGEN

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Classified by CDA Robert S. Deutsch. Reason: 1.5:(b)(d)

11. (C) Summary: Turkey is reacting with disappointment and resignation to the EU's decision at the Dec. 12-13 Copenhagen summit: 1) to review Turkey's EU accession bid in December 2004, withholding a definite date to start formal accession talks; and 2) to admit Cyprus as a member before a settlement has been reached on the island. At the same time, the Turks are beginning to walk back from some of their more dire pronouncements of catastrophe in the event things didn't go exactly as they hoped. Indeed, while the outcome of Copenhagen is short of Turkey's over-inflated expectations, it marks a real improvement in Turkey's prospects for eventual membership. Our task will be to help the GOT avoid getting bogged down in a search for scapegoats -- including the U.S., despite strong USG support for Turkey's cause. Our public and private statements therefore, should exude confidence that the results -- while not everything Turkey wanted -- reinforce Turkey's inevitable move toward EU. End summary.

Reaction: More Determination, "No Anger"

12. (U) Speaking at a joint press conference from Copenhagen Dec. 13, AK Chairman R. Tayyip Erdogan and P.M. Gul conveyed disappointment but determination to continue along the EU path.

-- Gul adopted a low-key approach. While offering obliquely that "some new conditions were added to the Copenhagen Criteria," Gul reiterated that Turkey had done everything in its power to press for an early date for formal EU accession talks. Noting that Turkey had "many potentialities" in foreign policy, he asserted that "the place of the (pro-)European perspective will be preserved," and that his Government remains firmly on the path to reform. "Our target is definite."

-- Erdogan noted that Turkey had been seeking to begin formal accession talks with the EU in 2003, but that the EU "delayed this a little...We will start accession talks in 2004" on the basis of the Copenhagen Criteria; any other condition...is out of the question." He added that "anger is unacceptable in politics."

The Blame Game

13. (C) In the run-up to Copenhagen, the Turks painted themselves into a corner by adopting a maximalist demand for a 2003 date to begin formal accession talks with the EU -- and by raising the specter of a "train wreck" if Cyprus was admitted to the EU prior to a "just" settlement. Senior MFA officials began to warn us stridently against presenting Turkey with a "fait accompli" on Cyprus, terming the UNSYG's plan as unacceptably flawed. Meanwhile, the AK Party came to power, decrying the traditional, "pointlessly hawkish" Cyprus stance, and the foot-dragging on EU-related political and human rights reform that characterized earlier governments. Nevertheless, by early December, after receiving what MFA officials described as "education" of quick learners on Cyprus and other issues, AK began to take the position that Cyprus could be solved only with a "positive" outcome from the EU summit -- defined as a clear, early date for the start of EU talks. A certain bullying posture entered some of the exchanges between Turkey and EU members.

14. (C) Far from helping the Turks achieve their aims, such

tactics only tarnished the solid improvement in Turkey's EU prospects that actually came out of the summit: a date for review and a promise of negotiations if Turkey's reforms continue and are implemented (unthinkable had the Ecevit Government still been in power). Turkey's tactics have also left it in an awkward position regarding and EU deal it said 24 hours ago was not acceptable, and a Republic of Cyprus in the EU in a manner the GOT has been describing for months as disastrous.

Scapegoating?

15. (C) Press reports in the days before the summit suggested Turkey would uphold national honor in the event of "humiliation" at Copenhagen by taking "punitive" action against select European countries. Meanwhile, the GOT -- politicians and bureaucrats -- pushed hard for strong USG support of its interests regarding the EU and Cyprus. Even before the dust settled at Copenhagen, Turks began to cast about for scapegoats. These include the USG. One columnist, known for reflecting the views of senior State officials, suggested that USG support for Turkey in the run-up to the summit was "counterproductive" and had only antagonized Europeans.

What To Do

16. (C) We will continue stressing to the Turks, particularly the AK Government/Party, that they need to continue accentuating the positive aspects of the outcome of Copenhagen. AK at T-2 is spinning the results in a moderate fashion (though Bulent Arinc, the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and a senior AK member, called the 2004 date "not positive"). We need to support that direction. In the days before the summit, AK officials privately asserted to us that their aggressive approach regarding an EU date was "only tactics." The Gul Government and Erdogan see EU ties as essential: 1) in their bid to change the political status quo and counter resistance from an entrenched State Establishment; and 2) to justifying reform to that Establishment as both a normative and "strategic" imperative for Turkey. They are already signaling a willingness to move ahead.

-- AK can take much credit, for pushing Copenhagen Criteria reforms hard and right out of the gate (ref A). Indeed, such progress would have been unthinkable had AK not replaced the Ecevit Government on Nov. 18.

-- Financial markets can accept an outcome along lines of that proposed by French and Germans. Although disappointed, investors see it as confirmation that Turkey will be anchored to the EU.

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